

# The Austrian Early Warning System

& the *ChEck iT!* project

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EWS Conference Zagreb, April 19th, 2011

# History

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- » 1997: EWS implemented as mailing list; operated by the Austrian FP; focus on provision of information for European EWS
- » 2002: „Strychnine“ identified by police in Heroine in Vienna, information spread via media
- » Discussions on reasons for and health consequences of new psychoactive substances and impurities as well as on information flow
- » Working group of Federal Drug Forum developed concept for a specific Austrian EWS with extended scope
- » 2006: Concept was accepted at the Federal Drug Forum
- » 2007: GÖG was commissioned to implement new system
- » 2008: „Official“ start of the new Austrian EWS with Infomail

## Information/Content

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- » Information concerning new substances or newly consumed substances in Austria – including biogenic drugs
- » Information concerning impurities or other uncommon circumstances (e.g. high concentration of active agents)
- » Information concerning new or especially risky patterns of consumption

## Basic Principles

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- » Use of psychoactive substances can lead to immediate health-related effects but has also long term consequences which are difficult to identify. Data is rarely available and only on decentralised level.
- » Prevention of health-related consequences is possible, but systematic, reliable and timely information is necessary.
- » In contrary to European EWS the interest of the Austrian system is based on a public health perspective and not on control.

# Objectives

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- » To establish an official network for information about new psychoactive substances and unexpected health-related consequences in Austria on basis of existing structures.
- » To provide reliable and timely information on health risks for prevention and treatment.
- » To include all relevant institutions and experts.
- » To establish an advisory board with experts from different areas, who provide advice in critical situations but also on strategic issues.
- » To disseminate information received from the EMCDDA resp. the European EWS to national partners and – if possible – to collect and provide feedback to the EMCDDA.

# Organisation

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- » Coordination of Austrian EWS: GÖG/ÖBIG
  
- » Advisory Board:
  - 13 experts, covering different areas: administration, addiction prevention, treatment, harm reduction, toxicology, forensic medicine, emergency medicine, addiction research.
  - Additional experts nominated: youth psychiatry, addiction prevention, forensic chemistry
  - Annual Meetings: First and constituent meeting in June 2007
  - Ad-hoc Meetings: Organised on demand after consultation with Ministry of Health, discussion of urgent/strategic issues, risk assessment

# Network

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Divided in two parts:

- » Network A (federal level): relevant ministries (e.g. Ministry of Health), the regional drug resp. addiction coordinators, relevant institutions on federal level (e.g. medical organization, pharmaceutical organization, social insurance), laboratories and addiction research as well as interfaces to the regional level.
- » Network B (regional level): institutions/services of the drug help system (outreach, low-threshold services, treatment facilities, counseling services, secondary prevention...), emergency departments and organizations, institutions for forensic medicine and administration (public health sector). Possible additional partners: police, hospitals, general practitioners, youth institutions...

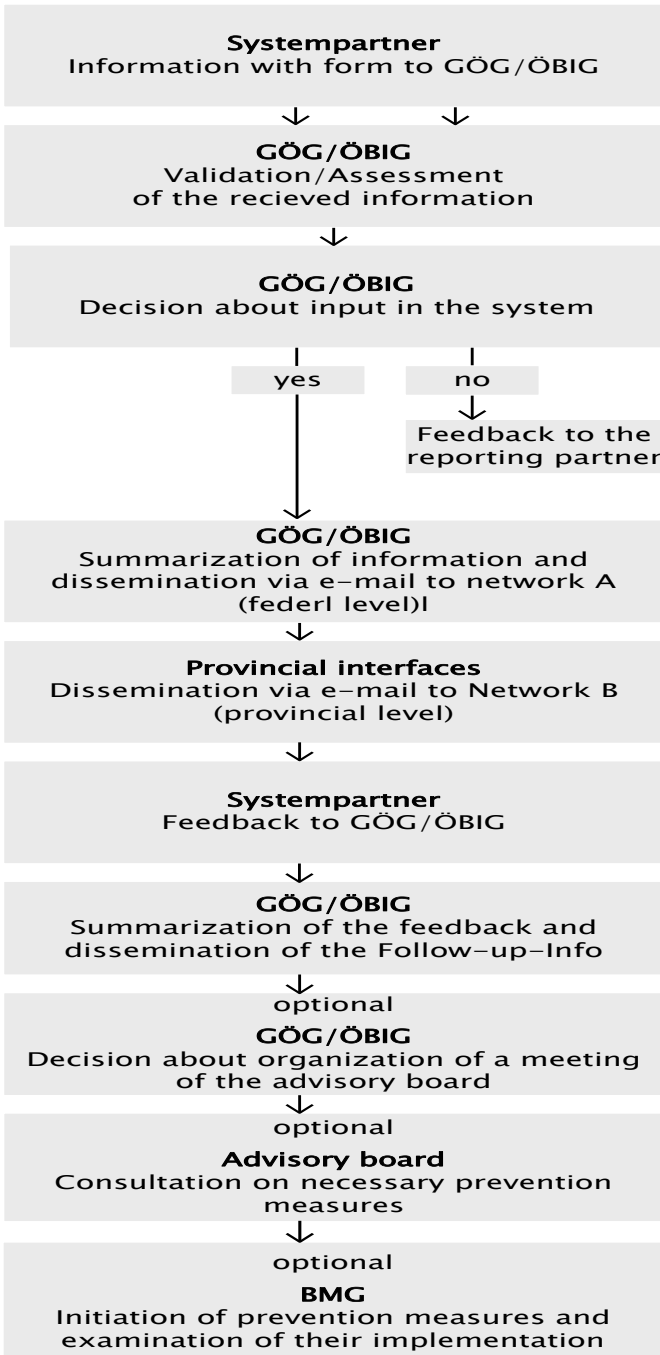
## Information flow

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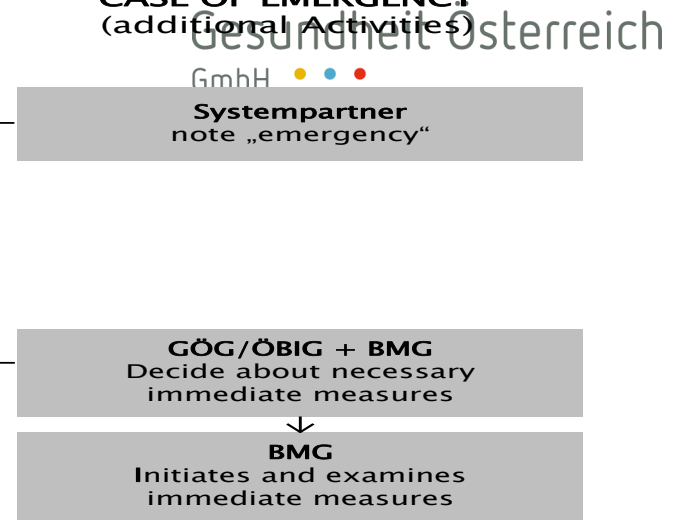
- » GÖG/ÖBIG is the central interface of the Austrian EWS: All reports/alerts are sent to and validated by GÖG/ÖBIG.
- » If relevant and useful/necessary the information/warning is disseminated to the network.
- » There is a special e-mail-address for the system ([ews@goeg.at](mailto:ews@goeg.at)).
- » There is a special form for alerts/reports about new substances etc. (substance, impurities, application, health risks, risk group, region, circumstances...).
- » There are also rules how to label and deal with these reports/alerts (no personal information...).
- » The process is clearly defined and distinguishes between “normal case” and “emergency case”.



# NORMAL CASE



# CASE OF EMERGENCY (additional Activities)



GmbH ● ● ●

**Systempartner**  
note „emergency“

**GÖG/ÖBIG + BMG**  
Decide about necessary  
immediate measures

**BMG**  
Initiates and examines  
immediate measures

## Who reports (by frequency)

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- » EMCDDA (reports from whole Europe)
- » *ChEck iT!* (currently boom of „research chemicals“)
- » BMG/AGES (especially „spice“-products and „legal highs“)
- » BMI (seizures)
- » VIZ (poison control center)
- » Emergency rooms/hospitals

## Experiences and way forward

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» Strengths:

Increasing motivation and participation in network, good identification and information on new substances and impurities

» Limitations:

Lack of analysis of substances within emergency departments of hospitals – often only speculations on relation between incident and substance. Time span between incident and information on results of analysis often too long.

» Further steps:

Improvement of information exchange esp. with hospitals, but also with laboratories. Promotion of web-based discussion forum. Tackling media coverage.

Willkommen, Gast!

[Forum](#) [Aktive Themen](#) [Suche](#) [Hilfe](#) [Einloggen](#) [Registrieren](#)

**EWS-Forum » EWS-Forum » aktuelle Warnungen**

3 Seiten | [1](#) | [2](#) | [3](#) | [>](#)

aktuelle Warnungen

Themen	Antworten	Aufrufe	Letzter Beitrag
<a href="#">EWS EU: neue Substanzen DMMA und alpha-PVP</a> <a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> , 11.04.2011 13:36:33(UTC)	0	5	<a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> ➡ 11.04.2011 13:36:33(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU: Warnung: JWH-250</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 22.03.2011 11:17:22(UTC)	0	14	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 22.03.2011 11:17:22(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS AT-Warnung: Diphenylme..</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 22.03.2011 11:12:48(UTC)	0	9	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 22.03.2011 11:12:48(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU: Alprazolam-hältiges Heroin</a> <a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> , 21.03.2011 09:32:54(UTC)	0	6	<a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> ➡ 21.03.2011 09:32:54(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS AT Warnung PMMA</a> <a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> , 09.03.2011 17:19:42(UTC)	0	6	<a href="#">alexander.egqerth</a> ➡ 09.03.2011 17:19:42(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU: Warnung: neue synth. Ca.....</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 03.03.2011 12:11:25(UTC)	0	4	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 03.03.2011 12:11:25(UTC)
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<a href="#">EWS EU: Warnung: Phenethylamins N.....</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 15.02.2011 10:35:28(UTC)	0	10	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 15.02.2011 10:35:28(UTC)
<a href="#">Keine neuen Beiträge</a> <a href="#">Warnung: PMA.....</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 01.02.2011 13:25:34(UTC)	0	8	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 01.02.2011 13:25:34(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU-Warnung: AM-2201</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 19.01.2011 10:19:11(UTC)	0	8	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 19.01.2011 10:19:11(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS AT-Warnung: Chlor in vermeintlichem Substitol</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 18.01.2011 14:00:34(UTC)	0	10	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 18.01.2011 14:00:34(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU-Warnung: Methylthieni.....</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 18.01.2011 11:04:43(UTC)	0	2	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 18.01.2011 11:04:43(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU-Warnung: CRA-13</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 13.01.2011 16:19:35(UTC)	0	6	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 13.01.2011 16:19:35(UTC)
<a href="#">EWS EU-Warnung: 2-(Diphenylmethyl)Pyrrolidin</a> <a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> , 13.01.2011 15:30:51(UTC)	0	7	<a href="#">andrea.bodenwinkler</a> ➡ 13.01.2011 15:30:51(UTC)

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# Information/Contact

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General Information, forms zum download:

<http://www.goeg.at/de/Bereich/Informations-und-Fruehwarnsystem-EWS.html>

Current warnings and discussion-forum:

<http://forum.goeg.at/ewsforum/>

Contact: [ews@goeg.at](mailto:ews@goeg.at)

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# The secondary prevention facility

*ChEck iT!*

## Short introduction of *ChEck iT!*

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- » institution for recreational drug users
- » low threshold approach
- » secondary prevention
- » scientific approach
- » Drug checking

## General Objectives

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- » prevention of problematic consumption patterns
- » avert short, middle and long term adverse health consequences
- » gain scientific knowledge of (illicit) substances on the black market and patterns of consumption



## Specific Objectives

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- » reach recreational drug users (particularly dance/club scene)
- » improve and extend knowledge of users about the effects and risks of consumption
- » promotion of risk-aware behavior
- » raise mutual trust and acceptance
- » warn against highly toxic substances

## Structural integration

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- » 1997 foundation of *ChEck iT!* as a part of Vienna Social Projects (VWS)
- » scientific co-operation with the Clinical Institute of Medical & Chemical Laboratory Diagnostics (Medical University Vienna)
- » financed by the City of Vienna and the Federal Ministry of Health

## Legal framework

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- » According to the Austrian Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act (SMG) the handling of illicit substances is permitted for scientific institutions.
- » This legal foundation is certified by the ministry of justice and ministry of health.

# Offers

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- » information and counselling online, via telephone and face to face in the *ChEck iT!* Homepage (since 2006) in different settings
- » information via [www.CheckYourDrugs.at](http://www.CheckYourDrugs.at)
- » information, counselling and analysis of substances on-site (~ 10–18 parties / year and ~ 10 with drug checking)

## Further offers

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- » preparation of informational material
- » trainings / workshops
- » reports / concepts
- » Research (e.g. Ketamine as a party drug / consumption patterns)

## Involved Professionals

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- » Team:
- » 6 employed socialworkers/psychologists  
190 hour per week (= 4,5 full-time positions)  
about 20 freelancers
- » 2 chemists (=1 full-time position) + scientific manager

## Principles & methodical approach

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- » voluntariness & anonymity
- » „accepting approach“
- » communication of objective information
- » counselling based on motivational interviewing

## Staff on-site

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- » Information and counselling:  
up to 10 social workers and psychologists (freelancers no volunteers)
- » Tent and Lab:  
up to 4 chemists



## Analytic procedure

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- » pills are documented, weighed and photographed
- » visitors scratch over sandpaper, <5 mg (keep rest)
- » Analysis by HPLC and mass spectrometry
- » results are posted within 15 – 40 mins (anonymously)

# Utilization 2010

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- » On site
  - » 20 days on site, 13 days with analysis
  - » 5.000 consultations and counselling interviews
  - » 450 analyses of psychoactive substances
  
- » ChEck iT! Homebase
  - » 500 Online enquiries
  - » 500 Telephone enquiries
  - » 700 Face to face consultations and counselling interviews

# Information/Contact

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[www.checkyourdrugs.at](http://www.checkyourdrugs.at)

[www.youtube.com/user/W3CheckYourDrugsAT](http://www.youtube.com/user/W3CheckYourDrugsAT)

[www.myspace.com/checkit\\_druginfo](http://www.myspace.com/checkit_druginfo)

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